

PAYING THE DUTY.

Custom House Officials Have
Some Queer Experiences.

PASSING A SEALSKIN COAT.

The Way the Matter Was Fixed Up
With an Appraiser and the Surplus
That Awaited the Owner—A Bride, a
Ring, a Husband and a Bluff.

The general impression is that the life of a customs inspector is a very dull routine of hardship, but such is not always the case.

The average person believes there is a little romance about the life and unquestionably the tang of the sea, but it almost never occurs to him that it is one of the funniest businesses in the world. The element of humor never enters into the general appreciation of the customs man, but it exists nevertheless.

There is a deputy collector now in the custom house of New York whose experiences in several years are really humorous. He is a grave, solemn looking man, thus bearing out the traditions, but that does not prevent him from enjoying the odd incidents that bob up in his line of duty. Speaking of them, he said:

"I had an odd experience the other day. A young man from an office in Wall street had gone to Europe to be married. In London he bought his wife a ring. He had put it in his declaration at a value of \$1,000. He brought his bride to me, and she held out her pretty little pink hand that I might examine the ring. It flashed and sparkled beautifully, but the dashes and sparkles didn't seem quite right, so I asked to be allowed to examine it more carefully. The bride blushing pulled the ring off and handed it to me. I showed it to an expert appraiser, who promptly declared that it was a fake piece of jewelry worth about \$10.

"I sympathized with the young man, and when I got a chance I told him the truth. 'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'I know. You see, I didn't have much money with me, so I bought this for \$10. But I had to ring in a bluff on my wife. Don't give me away.' The poor fellow was willing to pay several times the value of the ring to make his bluff good, but we fixed it up for him without his bride knowing the truth.

"Another laughable experience, but more serious for the passenger, happened not long ago. When I boarded a big steamship from Europe I was approached by a man who introduced himself as one who had formerly been collector of one of the most important western ports. I knew him very well by reputation. He was returning from abroad with his family. He explained that he was very wealthy and did not want to evade paying all the duty necessary, but he confided in me that he had a sealskin coat, bought in Paris for his wife, which he had not included in his declaration, knowing that sealskins could not be imported. Nevertheless, just because we were both members of the same fraternity, he wanted to know if there was not some way in which he could get the coat into the country.

"I would have been glad to help him, but didn't see how it could be done. However, I told him I would put the question up to the appraiser at the pier and if the matter could be arranged I would fix it up. The appraiser looked the coat over and told me to put it on the declaration as an imitation sealskin valued at \$75. The western man was delighted.

"That's what I call clever," he said. "A few days later I got a letter from this man asking me to call upon him at one of the most fashionable uptown hotels. I went to see him and had luncheon with him and his family. When luncheon was over he made a little golden cone on the table. It consisted of a twenty dollar gold piece, a ten, a five, a three, a two and a half and a one, all in gold. He shoved the stack over to me.

"Just a souvenir, a reminder of your cleverness in getting that seal coat through for me," he said.

"I refused to take it, but he tried to press it on me and told me to give it to the appraiser, but I refused. Later, when his family left us, I asked him how much he had paid for the coat in Paris. He said he had paid \$1,000. He could hardly believe it when I told him that we had not falsified the declaration, that the coat was an imitation and that \$75 was its outside value. He called a bellboy then and there and sent the coat to a furrier to have it appraised. The furrier sent back word that he would sell him all he wanted just like it for \$85 each."—New York Herald.

Mirror, Crystal and Sword.

The three symbols of the imperial house of Japan are the mirror, the crystal and the sword, and they are carried in front of the emperor on all state occasions. Each has its significance. "Look at the mirror and reflect thyself," or, in other words, "Know thyself," is the message of the mirror. "Be pure and shine" is the crystal's injunction, while the sword is a reminder to "Be sharp."

A Custom of the Tyrol.

In the Tyrol it is the custom for women and children to come out into the open when it is the latter's bedtime and sing. Their husbands, fathers and brothers answer them from the hills on their way home.

The injuries we do and those we suffer are seldom weighed in the same balance.—Simmons.

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OLD RUSSIAN PROVERB.

Born of One of the Most Tragical Episodes in Muscovite History.

The Russian peasant has a saying which invariably puzzles the foreigner, "Too polite and die like Bekovitch."

The proverb refers to one of the most tragic episodes in Muscovite history.

In the early spring of 1717 Prince Bekovitch Cheraski led an armed expedition consisting of 4,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry into the then almost unknown interior of south central Asia.

His ostensible object was to open up commercial relations with the khans of Khiva and Bokhara, his real one to see if it were possible to invade India from the north.

The prince, with whom were many officers of the imperial bodyguard, a brilliant company, marched his men across the arid steppes with difficulty and on Aug. 15 halted some eighty miles from the city of Khiva.

The Khivans, ignoring his professions of friendship, attacked in force, but were easily defeated by the better armed and better disciplined soldiers of the czar.

Their khan thereupon resorted to diplomacy. He visited the Russian camp in state, explained that the attack delivered by his people was all a mistake and invited Prince Bekovitch and his principal officers to visit his capital as his guests.

Two days later, at a grand entertainment, the khan toasted his "friends the Russians" and vowed eternal friendship. He also took the opportunity of requesting Prince Bekovitch to divide his army into small detachments for entertainment in the surrounding villages, regretting the inability of his capital to entertain so many guests.

The Russian commander politely agreed to the politely preferred request, the Russian force was broken up, and the khan laughed sardonically.

His turn had come. Early next day he killed Bekovitch and forwarded his head as a gift to the khan of Bokhara. Then he annihilated the Russian army.

WHERE CUPID REIGNS.

Love Making Seems to Be a Sort of Mania in Spain.

Writes one who has traveled much in Spain: "As the majority of Andalusian girls are engaged at the age of seventeen, the senoritas do not go to many dances, for a Spaniard would as soon allow his fiancée to dance with another man as he would let her wear a harem skirt or ride a bicycle. At their parties Spanish girls get unbounded admiration, and a senior who had reached the age of nineteen and talked to a girl without trying to make love to her would be considered gauche in the extreme. The guests are given nothing to eat on these festive occasions, glasses of cold water being simply handed round when they are leaving."

"Love is an all absorbing topic in this amorous land of orange flowers and revolutions. In Spain we do not talk of money; we talk of love, a Spaniard once said to me. He was right, for love is the beginning and end of every Spaniard's thoughts. On the feast days the young men play no games, preferring to stand about and see the girls pass, and in every daily newspaper you will read of duels."

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OUR BIG GAME.

Bret Harte's Explanation That Made the Matter Quite Clear.

Bret Harte, the whimsical and brilliant chronicler of Roaring Camp and Poker Flat, used to become weary to exasperation at the foolish admirers who could not separate him from his characters and who insisted on confounding their experiences and predilections with his own.

Since he wrote of pioneer mining camps in the early days of the gold fever, his characters were often heroic only in part. Indeed, they were quite as often rogues as heroes. As he obviously could not be identified with the rougher types among them, the favorite notion seemed to be that he was, or had been, a gentleman gambler. With that idea in mind a young Englishman in London once tried hard to get him to describe and explain poker, which he referred to as "your great American game." Mr. Harte conveniently misunderstood him.

"So you say 'great game' over here?" he inquired amiably. "In the United States, now, we call it 'big game'—grizzlies, catamounts, buffalo and bighorn—don't you know. But we don't chase them with pokers. No, no! They're abundant, but they don't often come into the houses, really. It's usually necessary to go outside with a gun."

At another time he learned that a certain noted hostess, whose invitation to dine he had just accepted, had been questioning one of his intimates to learn if it were true that he was a reformed gambler.

"Not reformed," declared Mr. Harte wearily. "Tell her I am beyond reformation. Tell her that I was my own model for the gambler Oakhurst and that the scene of his suicide is pure autobiography."—Youth's Companion.

FREAKS OF DYNAMITE.

One That Was Lucky For the Man Down in the Mine Shaft.

"Not long ago," said a Leadville mining man, "there occurred one of those freaks of dynamite in one of the deep shafts of the Carbonate camp that might not happen again in a thousand years."

"Two men at the bottom of a shaft had put in five four and one-half foot holes which were to be exploded with dynamite cartridges 1½ inches in diameter. As is usual in such cases, they gave the customary signals to the hoisting engineer and after lighting the fuse stepped on the bale of the bucket and started upward. When about ten feet from the bottom one of the men had an epileptic fit and toppled over. His partner tried to reach the bell cord to stop the bucket, but it was too late. The bell cord could be reached only from the lower part of the shaft. When the engineer saw only one man come through the collar of the shaft at the surface his face blanched.

"Where's Jim?" he asked excitedly. "Quickly the miner related the circumstances and exhibited his hand, bloody from contact with the sharp rock in an effort to reach the bell cord before the bucket entered the timbering. The men, their hearts beating wildly, listened in suspense for the five explosions of dynamite that would tear their unfortunate comrade to pieces. They heard five faint reports, one after the other. They were simply the detonating caps of the cartridges. Every one of the charges of dynamite had missed fire—failed to explode. I have known of one or even three shots out of five missing, but I don't believe there is another case on record where five missed as providentially as in this case."—Exchange.

A Musical Rebuke.

As to the possibility of humor in music the London Telegraph says: "If composers and performers had more of the sense of humor music's appeal would be immensely wider. The truth is that musical performers are far too apt to take themselves too seriously." The solemn attitude of some musicians toward their art was humorously rebuked recently by a well known New York pianist, who remarked to his gifted wife, also a pianist, at the conclusion of a performance by the latter: "My dear, don't look so doleful! Music isn't a funeral; music is a joke!"

A Very Different Matter.

A Penn avenue business man was taking an employee to task. "See here! You wrote a personal letter yesterday during business hours. You used your employer's time. That's stealing."

The employee flared back. "Well, sir," he said, "I have worked overtime at least 100 times a year for the past ten years."

"Ha, hum! That's business."—Pittsburgh Post.

In After Years.

Old Foggy Father—My father never supplied me with money to squander on fast horses, theater parties, late dinners and the like. Up to Date Son—Oh, that's all right, dad. You must remember that I come of a more aristocratic family than you did.—Chicago News.

Forced Youth.

"I insist that I am just as young as I used to be."

"That's all right as long as you don't try to act that way."—Houston Post.

When Time Doesn't Fly.

Sitting around a country depot waiting for a midnight train will do a lot to dissipate that tempus fugit theory.—Athletic Globe.

He who is not ready today will be late so tomorrow.—Ovid.

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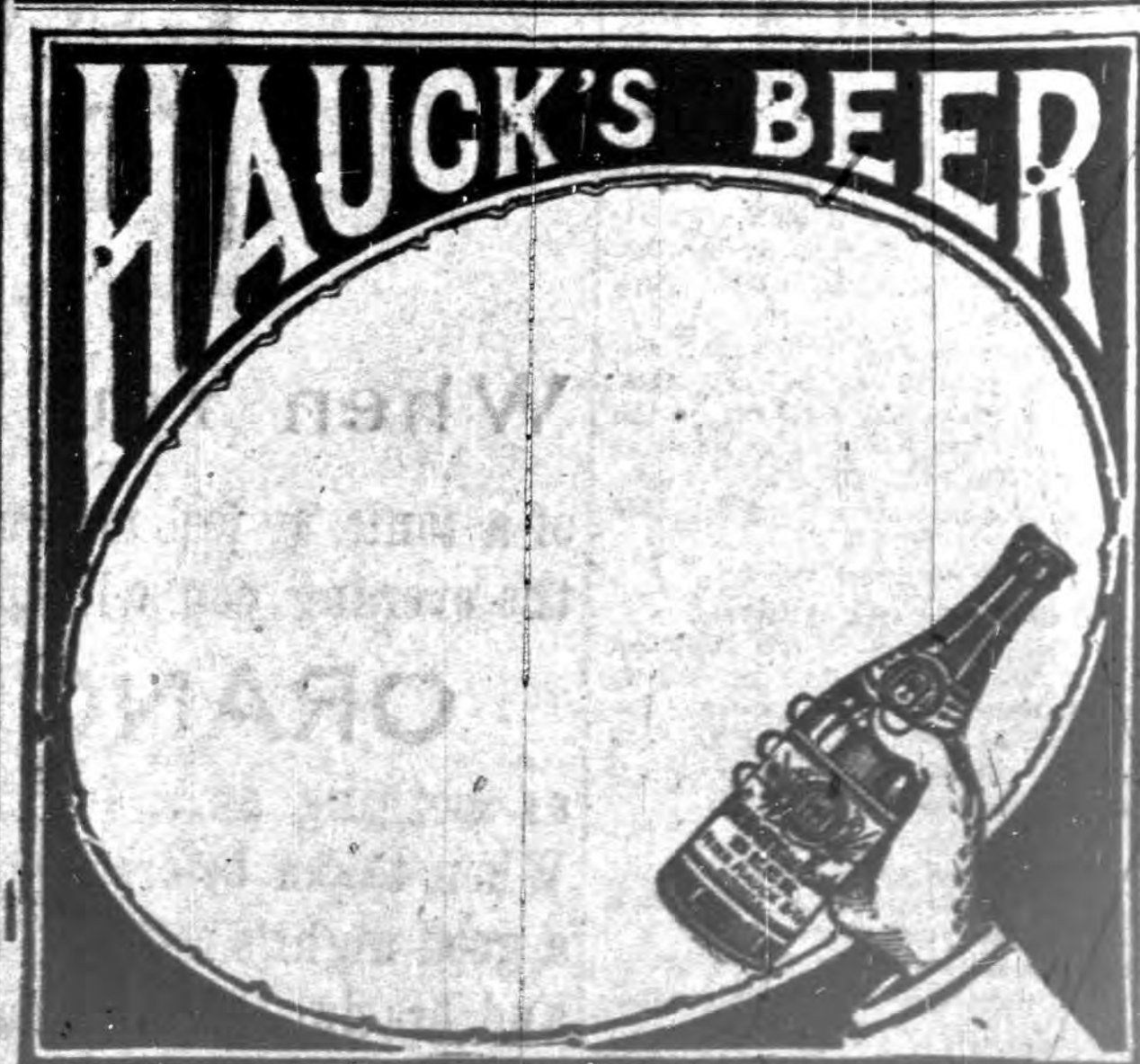
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